



The life of the beach.

**DARWIN SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

PO Box 42771 Casuarina NT 0811  
Daribah Road Brinkin NT 0810  
Phone (08) 8945 0447  
A.B.N 58 452 374 895



Trevor Riley  
Chairperson – Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review  
C/. Department of Health  
PO Box 40596  
Casuarina NT 0811

Dear Trevor,

The Darwin Surf Life Saving Club appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the review of both the issues of recreational marine licensing and the potential introduction of blood alcohol limits for those persons in control of recreational and commercial vessels. The club sees this is two separate issue. The first being the introduction of a licensing system that would entail some form of training for recreational vessel owners/operators. Commercial vessels already have a training and certification system that operates under Australian Maritime and Safety Authority regulations and are administered and enforced by Northern Territory Marine Branch. The second issue is in regards to maritime safety and the appropriate blood alcohol limit.

The club has many members that have Surf Life Saving (SLS) powered craft training and qualifications such as rescue jetskis, inflatable rescue boats, rigid hull inflatable rescue boats and commercial qualifications for the Surf Life Saving Northern Territory offshore rescue boat. In all other states in Australia, SLS members are required to hold the state recreational boating license as well as the SLS qualification to operate these craft. The club believes that appropriate training to operate vessels is imperative to ensure the safety of our members and for the public which we provide a service for. We have also witnessed firsthand over many years the consequences of poor boating skills in the numbers of rescues we have performed, to assist members of the recreational boating public. We have also witnessed at events such as the Beer Can Regatta, recreational boaters who have been intoxicated who are in control of vessels in close proximity to other vessels and persons in the water; a dangerous situation. Club members have also witnessed recreational boaters who do not have an understanding of the regulations in regards to safe speeds, especially close to the shore line and in regulated areas such as Mindil Beach, Nightcliff Beach and Fannie Bay. We have also witnessed many recreational vessels that do not display any lights whilst operating at night and this has, on several occasions, nearly resulted in collisions.

The club encourages the introduction of recreational boating licenses with an appropriate training course to educate recreational boaters in maritime safety, safe control of a vessel and maritime regulations. The issue is not specifically whether the Northern Territory should have a recreational boating license, than it requires recreational boating operators to have some form of training so that they are safe in the maritime environment and safe around other recreational boaters and persons that maybe on or in the water.



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The club would also support the premise that all drivers/operators of vehicles or vessels should be required to have a safe blood alcohol limit. This would provide a safer maritime environment, especially in the Darwin region which has experienced an exponential increase in both commercial and recreational vessels in the past 10 years. The introduction of an appropriate blood alcohol limit for vessel drivers and operators can only positively contribute to a safer maritime environment in the Northern Territory.

The major negative impact that the club foresees is the process and time required to provide appropriate training, assessment and licencing of the quite large recreational boating fraternity in the Northern Territory. Many recreational boaters do have safe skills and knowledge in driving/operating their vessels and some form of recognition of existing competency would need to be developed.

The club supports both the introduction of a formal training requirement for recreational vessel drivers/operators and an appropriate blood alcohol limit for those drivers/operators. This reform would only contribute to a safer maritime environment.

Regards,  
Darwin Surf Life Saving Club Committe